



How to Create an Immersion School Road Map

Overview

This condensed and organized road map tool complements other resources provided with the How to Start a Native Language Immersion School Summer Series. It offers a quick, easy-to-follow overview of essential steps and tasks as it distills the complex school-creation process into manageable, approachable components. The road map helps founders create a structured action plan by outlining tasks in chronological order, ensuring that critical steps are noticed and remembered. Emerging programs can also use it to track progress as they work through each task or milestone.

Step 1: Develop and Engage Core Team

The core team usually consists of the school founders. They see the need and begin identifying, defining, and communicating the market to the relevant stakeholders and decision makers. This team should include parents and community members who share similar goals, commit to solving the need, and bring skills and meaningful relationships to the development process. The core team will also want to engage with decision-making entities, such as Tribal education agencies (TEAs), state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), or charter school authorizers.

Use this checklist of tasks to assess your level of commitment and engage a core team. Adjust and expand it as needed to fit project requirements and goals.

Assess Commitment Level

- ☐ *Self-Reflection:* Reflect on your motivations and commitment to the project.
- ☐ *Define the "Why":* Clearly articulate the purpose and driving force behind starting the school.
- ☐ *Resource Evaluation:* Assess available time, finances, and personal support networks.
- ☐ *Risk Analysis:* Consider potential challenges and risks associated with the project.
- ☐ *Seek External Opinions:* Solicit feedback and advice from trusted friends, family, or mentors.
- ☐ *Set Realistic Expectations:* Establish [SMART \(specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound\) goals](#) and milestones.

Engage a Core Team

- ☐ *Define Roles:* Define needed stakeholder roles and responsibilities.
- ☐ *Identify Potential Team Members:* Seek individuals who share the vision and values and who can support project design, development, implementation, and continuous improvement.
- ☐ *Recruit and Build Relationships:* Personally approach potential team members. Show how you share goals and tell them “what’s in it for them.”
- ☐ *Offer Clear Roles and Benefits:* Clearly define each team member’s role.

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- ☐ *Create a Collaborative Environment:* Foster a culture of collaboration, open communication, and inclusivity.
- ☐ *Schedule Regular Meetings:* Establish a meeting schedule to discuss progress and next steps.
- ☐ *Acknowledge and Appreciate:* Recognize and celebrate team members' contributions (e.g., newsletter shoutouts, social media posts, incentives).
- ☐ *Provide Opportunities for Growth:* Offer professional development for the team.
- ☐ *Manage Conflicts:* Be prepared to [address conflicts constructively](#) and proactively.
- ☐ *Engage Decision Makers:* Engage any relevant decision-making entities, such as TEAs, SEAs, LEAs, or charter school authorizers.

Step 2: Assess and Identify Needs, Purpose, and Structure

In this step, think about the type of school and organization that would best support your community. The core team should select an immersion model and school structure, identity (i.e., mission, vision, values), and governance structure. To do so, conduct an initial [needs assessment](#) to determine the type of school that is desired or needed, along with the intended vision for the educational model. Another important component at this stage of development is exploring operational structures and decision making, including facilities, finance, human resources, food services, transportation, security, and maintenance. Here are some specific actions to help lay a solid foundation.

Define Vision and Mission

- ☐ Clearly articulate the purpose and goals of your school.
- ☐ Develop a compelling mission statement that resonates with the community.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance

- ☐ Research and comply with local, state, and national education laws and regulations.
- ☐ Establish a legal entity for the school, such as a nonprofit or charter organization, if necessary.

Create a Business Plan

- ☐ Develop a comprehensive business plan that outlines budget, funding sources, and financial projections.
- ☐ Include details about tuition, fundraising, and grants.

Conduct Community Outreach and Engagement

- ☐ Host community meetings and workshops to introduce your school concept.
- ☐ Listen to feedback and address concerns from community members.
- ☐ Foster partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and government agencies.



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Step 3: Curriculum, Instructional Strategies, and Assessments

Most often, Native Language immersion schools create their curriculum, instructional strategies, and materials, including assessments. For some schools, it means recreating or merging language and culture-based standards with overarching standards required by an SEA, LEA, or TEA. If possible, give instructional staff time to develop learning standards, curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments before students enter the classroom.

This checklist can guide curriculum, instructional strategy, and assessment development.

Curriculum Development

- ☐ *Educational Needs Assessment:* Identify the educational needs and goals of your students and align the school's mission and vision to those needs.
- ☐ *Standards Alignment:* Align the curriculum with relevant educational standards, whether they are state, national, or international.
- ☐ *Set Learning Objectives:* Define SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound) goals for each grade level or subject area.
- ☐ *Scope and Sequence:* Outline your curriculum to indicate what topics will be covered when and in what order.
- ☐ *Content Selection:* Choose appropriate content, resources, textbooks, and materials to support your curriculum objectives.
- ☐ *Differentiation:* Plan how to meet the diverse needs of your students, including those with varying abilities and learning preferences.
- ☐ *Integration:* Consider interdisciplinary connections and integration of subjects where relevant.
- ☐ *Assessment Integration:* Ensure that formative and summative assessments align with the curriculum objectives.

Instructional Strategies

- ☐ *Pedagogical Approach:* Define preferred teaching and learning approaches, such as project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, or others.
- ☐ *Lesson Planning:* Develop detailed lesson plans that align with your curriculum and instructional goals.
- ☐ *Teaching Materials:* Prepare or select teaching materials, including textbooks, worksheets, multimedia, and technology tools.
- ☐ *Classroom Management:* Establish classroom management strategies and procedures to create a positive learning environment.
- ☐ *Student Engagement:* Plan for student engagement techniques, interactive activities, and hands-on learning experiences.
- ☐ *Feedback Mechanisms:* Incorporate mechanisms for providing timely and constructive feedback to students.
- ☐ *Professional Development:* Provide training and ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to implement effective instructional strategies.



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Assessment Development

- ☐ *Assessment Types*: Determine the types of assessments to use, such as formative, summative, performance-based, or standardized tests.
- ☐ *Rubrics and Criteria*: Develop clear assessment rubrics and criteria that align with your learning objectives and standards.
- ☐ *Authentic Assessments*: Include authentic assessments that mirror real-world tasks and challenges where applicable.
- ☐ *Data Collection*: Define how to collect assessment data, including the use of technology or tools for grading and tracking student progress.
- ☐ *Feedback and Reporting*: Plan for timely feedback to students and communication of assessment results to parents and stakeholders.
- ☐ *Data Analysis*: Establish a process for analyzing assessment data to inform instructional improvements.
- ☐ *Assessment Calendar*: Create a schedule for when assessments will be administered throughout the school year.
- ☐ *Assessment Security*: Ensure the security and integrity of assessments, especially for high-stakes exams.
- ☐ *Accommodations and Special Needs*: Make provisions for accommodating students with special needs during assessments.
- ☐ *Continuous Improvement*: Continuously review and revise assessments based on data and feedback to enhance their effectiveness.

Step 4: Professional Development and Teacher Support

Be intentional about staff development, particularly as you get started. Look for opportunities to engage the entire school staff in mission- and priority-driven development that supports learning in every aspect of the school.

Use this checklist of tasks to guide you through developing strong group learning and coaching support for your staff.

Planning Professional Development

- ☐ *Assess Needs*: Conduct a needs assessment to identify the specific professional development needs of your staff.
- ☐ *Set Clear Objectives*: Define SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound) goals for professional learning.
- ☐ *Align with School Goals*: Ensure that professional development aligns with the school's mission, vision, and strategic goals.
- ☐ *Budget Allocation*: Allocate a budget for professional development resources, including workshops, courses, materials, speakers, and payroll for staff.
- ☐ *Prioritize Topics*: Prioritize topics based on relevance, urgency, and staff input.
- ☐ *Delivery Methods*: Determine the most suitable delivery methods, such as workshops, online courses, peer mentoring, or conferences.

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- ☐ *Scheduling*: Create a professional development calendar that considers the availability and preferences of staff members.
- ☐ *External Resources*: Identify external resources, experts, or consultants who can contribute to professional development.
- ☐ *Evaluation Plan*: Develop an evaluation plan to assess the effectiveness of each professional development activity.
- ☐ *Feedback Mechanisms*: Establish mechanisms for collecting feedback from teachers to improve future offerings.
- ☐ *Documentation*: Keep records of attendance, materials, and evaluations for each professional development session.
- ☐ *Communication*: Clearly communicate the purpose, expectations, and benefits of professional development to staff members.
- ☐ *Support Implementation*: Provide support and resources for teachers to implement new strategies or knowledge gained from professional development.

Teacher Support and Coaching

- ☐ *Mentorship Program*: Implement a mentorship or coaching program to support new or less experienced teachers.
- ☐ *Peer Observations*: Encourage peer observations and feedback to promote collaboration and growth.
- ☐ *Resource Sharing*: Establish a system for teachers to share resources, lesson plans, and best practices.
- ☐ *Professional Learning Communities*: Facilitate or encourage the formation of professional learning communities (PLCs) among staff.
- ☐ *Access to Educational Resources*: Ensure teachers have access to a well-equipped library, digital resources, and instructional materials.
- ☐ *Feedback Culture*: Promote a culture of continuous improvement and open feedback among staff members.
- ☐ *Career Pathways*: Provide information and support for teachers to pursue advanced degrees, certifications, or leadership roles.
- ☐ *Wellness Initiatives*: Address staff well-being by offering stress management resources, wellness programs, or counseling services.
- ☐ *Recognition and Appreciation*: Acknowledge and celebrate teachers' achievements and contributions regularly.
- ☐ *Professional Development Records*: Maintain records of each teacher's professional development progress and achievements.
- ☐ *Support for Diverse Needs*: Consider and address the diverse needs and backgrounds of your teaching staff in your support programs.
- ☐ *Feedback and Adaptation*: Continuously gather feedback from teachers about the support programs and adjust as needed.



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Step 5: School Operations

Underlying every step of the creation process should be a well-planned and highly efficient school operations plan. This is crucial for developing a solid and secure working and learning environment. Operations include human resources, finance and budgeting, facilities, transportation, food services, student affairs, and health and safety. The planning should begin as you lay the school foundation in earlier steps.

However, implementing high-quality daily operations is an ongoing task that affects all previous actions. A key component to any school is appropriate hiring for leadership positions and other operational staff. Another critical operations task is securing appropriate learning facilities. Locating a suitable facility may require space-sharing agreements, leasing agreements, purchasing existing property, or constructing a new facility. Depending on the school's grade levels, there may also be permitting requirements. Once you clearly understand your program and operations, you should be able to finalize your annual budget and work to ensure sustainability.

Here are some examples of operational considerations and tasks. Some components of daily operations may not fit the school model you are creating. Remember that the checklist may not include all operational choices or tasks. You should align these items to your school model and needs.

Student Recruitment and Enrollment

- ☐ Develop student/family recruitment plan and calendar.
- ☐ Develop application process and procedures including forms, deadlines, and submission process.
- ☐ Define your school's admission criteria. Clearly outline the criteria used to select students. This may include factors like grade levels or residence.
- ☐ Create and market clear channels of communication for staff and stakeholders.

Financial Management

- ☐ Develop transparent financial management policies and procedures.
- ☐ Create a financial and budget reporting system for stakeholders that include the board, leaders, staff members, and community.

Human Resources

- ☐ Develop personnel policies and procedures that align with federal and state employment laws and union agreements.
- ☐ Develop personnel position descriptions, recruitment, hiring, and onboarding procedures for all staff, including the principal, an office manager, a registrar, counselors, food service staff, custodians, bus drivers, and security personnel.
- ☐ Schedule professional development opportunities for all staff.
- ☐ Develop personnel evaluation process and calendar.

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Food Services

- ☐ Select food vendor services.
- ☐ Verify food services and schedule meals based on age development and efficiency.
- ☐ Ensure that the cafeteria is organized.

Facilities

- ☐ Secure appropriate facilities (indoor and outdoor).
- ☐ Schedule and conduct regular safety drills (e.g., fire, lockdown) as per policy.
- ☐ Ensure all security measures are in place, such as surveillance cameras and access control systems.
- ☐ Determine supervising duty posts and assignments so that staff are present at entrances to supervise and communicate with students and families.
- ☐ Secure all necessary technology for staff and students.

Transportation

- ☐ Secure safe modes of student transportation before, during, and after school hours.
- ☐ Secure appropriately licensed and trained transportation staff.
- ☐ Develop regular schedules for maintaining and licensing vehicles and staff.
- ☐ Develop routes and schedules for before, during, and after school transportation.

Step 6: Program Evaluation

Conduct program evaluation to assess and analyze various aspects of the school's operations and educational programs to ensure effectiveness, accountability, and continuous improvement. Program evaluation provides evidence that the immersion school is fulfilling its mission and meeting its stated goals and objectives. It also informs the effective allocation of resources, including financial and staff allocation. Program evaluation may also assist in meeting oversight and accountability requirements of authorizing or governance structures, including parents.

Here are some examples of program evaluation considerations and tasks. Some components may not fit the school model you are creating, and the checklist may not include all operational choices or tasks you need to address. You should align these items to your school model and needs.

Define Objectives

- ☐ Define and clarify the scope of the evaluation, such as assessing curriculum effectiveness, student language proficiency, or cultural integration.
- ☐ Determine “the why” for conducting an evaluation.
- ☐ Identify how the results of the evaluation will be used.
- ☐ Determine how the evaluation informs future practice.



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Identify and Locate Appropriate Resources

- ☐ Identify qualified evaluation expertise.
- ☐ Develop request for proposals process and materials.
- ☐ Engage in a proposal review process.

Conduct the Evaluation Process

- ☐ Collaborate with the evaluator you've chosen to develop an evaluation plan.
- ☐ Monitor the data evaluation collection, analysis, and reporting processes.
- ☐ Share findings and implement recommendations.